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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the topic of composition, especially in the state of Illinois, this special journal issue begins with a description of the Illinois Articulation Project, a network developed to share and coordinate writing in the state. The second article describes Illinois State University's National Endowment for the Humanities program for articulating writing instruction across high school, community college, and university levels. This article is followed by an explanation of the results of the Writing Assessment Questionnaire that was sent to all faculty at Illinois State University. The fourth article summarizes the use of holistic scoring in the manner of the Educational Testing Service, and shows how this method can be used in a high school English department. Another article illustrates one method of engaging students' interest in their writing assignments, while the remaining two articles show what is being done in composition research with fourth and fifth grade students and summarize research on combining the teaching of reading and writing. (HOD)

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FALL 1983

Illinois Projects and Research in Composition

ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN

Illinois Association of Teachers of English

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Illinois Projects and Research in Composition

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ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE*

This issue is a special project. The English Department at Illinois State University was asked to develop an issue on composition especially in the state of Illinois. All, save one, of the articles are by Illinois authors, describing Illinois projects.

The issue begins with a description of the Illinois Articulation Project. Elizabeth McMahan describes the network which has been developed to share and coordinate writing in the state. Next, Ron Fortune describes Illinois State University's National Endowment for the Humanities program for articulating writing instruction across high school, community college, and university levels. Maurice Scharton then explains the results of the Writing Assessment Questionnaire which was sent to all faculty at Illinois State.

Don Silkowski's article summarizing the use of holistic scoring, in the manner of the Educational Testing Service, follows. Silkowski shows how this method can be used in a high school English department. The next article by JoAnna Mink illustrates one method of engaging students' interest in their writing assignments.

The final two articles are by leaders in the field of composition research. Karl Taylor shows what is being done in his research with fourth and fifth graders. Richard Gebhart's article on teaching reading while teaching writing closes the issue. He summarizes research in the area and suggests a new direction for combining reading and writing.

This special project has been exciting, given the choices of materials available and the variety of activities being pursued in the state. I have enjoyed working with this special issue.

Janice Neuleib
Associate Professor of English
Illinois State University

*Note from the Editor

When the English Department at Illinois State University was awarded a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to further the state's work in composition articulation, I invited the faculty members involved in the project to use the Fall's *Bulletin* to bring our readers up to date on this important topic. I wish to thank Janice Neuleib of Illinois State University for agreeing to act as Guest Editor for this issue.

Dorothy Matthews

Getting It Together: The Illinois English Articulation Project

ELIZABETH MCMAHAN
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Excellent efforts at overall articulation of English programs have been made by the University of Illinois. For thirty-three years the University has sponsored a high school teachers' articulation conference each fall. Each spring for nineteen years the University has hosted an articulation conference for community college and university professors. In addition the University has housed the Illinois Association of Teachers of English since 1909. For years the IATE *Bulletin* was sent to all English teachers in the state and is still heavily underwritten by the University.

In addition, Illinois State University has sponsored the Heads of Illinois Secondary English Departments for twenty years, and other schools have held occasional high school and college articulation meetings. No one, however, had addressed exclusively the issue of articulating writing programs throughout the State. In 1980 the State Board of Education and the Board of Higher Education approached the problem by appointing a Joint Education Committee charged with examining the area of writing skills. This group, after gathering testimony on the topic, convened a task force of distinguished educators[1] from all levels—elementary, secondary and postsecondary—to further examine the problem and recommend solutions. In December of 1981, the recommendations resulting from these investigations made clear the need to provide in-service training for writing teachers, to strengthen teacher education curricula, and to expand applied and basic research, including research on improving the assessment of writing skills.

Fundamental to carrying out these recommendations stands the need for articulation—for discovering how writing is presently being taught at every educational level so that the measures proposed by the Task Forces can be implemented. In November of 1982, the State Board of Education and the Board of Higher Education conferred on Illinois State University and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale the responsibility for putting into effect recommendations of the Writing Skills Task Force. In December of 1982, delegations from these two universities met to form the Steering Committee of the Illinois English Articulation Project.[2] This group agreed to plan a series of conferences involving schools at the elementary and

secondary levels, community colleges, and four-year state institutions. These meetings, then, would focus on the improvement of writing skills through increased understanding of the process of instruction across all grade levels.

The initial conference, held May 3, 1983, at Illinois State, enabled representatives from the major four-year public universities to exchange information about their programs. The morning sessions were devoted to small group discussion of what each school is currently doing about testing writing skills, offering required and elective writing courses, training present and future writing teachers, and encouraging writing research. The afternoon sessions involved planning ways to strengthen programs and to continue the exchange of information.

It was decided that summaries of the valuable data presented at this initial conference should be published in the next issue of the *IATE Bulletin*. Then, in order to keep the information current, a clearing house called the Illinois Articulation Network will be maintained at Illinois State. Department chairs should report any significant program changes pertaining to composition to this address:

Illinois Articulation Network
Department of English
Illinois State University
Normal, IL 61761.

All changes will be recorded, and the following concise and current projects on writing activities at the state universities in Illinois will be sent to interested persons upon request:

1. Teacher Preparation
2. In-Service Training and Professional Development
3. Requirements and Curricular Development
4. Research and Dissemination
5. Testing Programs

Eventually the Articulation Network should house on computer disk general descriptions of the writing programs of Illinois community colleges and high schools. Among the other kinds of information that could be provided are descriptions of grading standards used in freshman composition courses across the state, a list of research projects involving writing currently in progress, a description of successful writing-across-the-curriculum programs, and perhaps lists of the top fifty literary works most frequently assigned in high schools, community colleges, and public universities.

In order to continue gathering this useful information and to further the progress already begun, the Steering Committee is planning meetings similar to the one recently held at ISU for delegates from

community colleges and high school teachers. To avoid adding to the current multitude of meetings, these proceedings will take place as far as possible at conferences already scheduled – at the spring Allerton Articulation Conference sponsored by the University of Illinois; at the IATE Conference; at the Conference for Heads of Illinois Secondary English Departments sponsored by Illinois State; and at the High School Teachers Articulation Conferences sponsored by the University of Illinois and by Eastern Illinois University.

Clearly much work remains to be done, and success depends upon the energetic cooperation of a large number of people. But the project is vital and has been too long delayed. For all who value literacy, the task should be worth doing.

NOTES

[1]The members of The Task Force on Writing Skills: Ms. Kathryn Ransom, Chair, Reading Coordinator for Springfield School District 186; The Honorable Blanche Martin, Regional Superintendent, Educational Service Region of Boone/Winnebago Counties; Dr. Curtis McCray, Provost, Governors State University; Dr. Lillian Parks, Deputy Superintendent, East St. Louis School District 189; Dr. Martin Steinmann, English Professor, University of Illinois/Chicago Circle; Dr. Karl Taylor, Basic Studies Department, Illinois Central College; Ms. Betty Thielemann, New Trier West High School, Northfield, IL; Dr. Russell Thiems, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Elmhurst School District 205; and Dr. Howard Webb, Jr., System Academic Officer, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

[2]Steering Committee for the Illinois English Articulation Project: Bruce C. Appleby, SIU-C; Stephen Bernhardt, SIU-C; Ron Fortune, ISU; Jewell Friend, SIU-C; Charles B. Harris, ISU; Elizabeth McMahan, ISU; Janice Neuleib, ISU; Kathryn Ransom, Springfield School District 186; Mary Sasse, Carbondale High School; Karl Taylor, Illinois Central College; and Howard Webb, SIU-C.

Charting the Development of Writing Abilities: Illinois State University's NEH-Supported Articulation Program

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One of the most important developments currently taking place in composition teaching focuses on the efforts of high school, communi-

ty college, and university writing teachers to coordinate their perceptions of and approaches to the teaching of writing. Various organizations concerned with the quality of humanities education at the secondary and post-secondary levels have emphasized the need for more cooperation among those who teach writing at these levels. The Rockefeller Commission on the Humanities, for example, argued that, more than teachers in most other disciplines, secondary and post-secondary writing teachers must integrate their efforts because growth in writing depends especially on constant practice combined with a sequential development of skills. While high school and college writing teachers may be able to provide constant practice independently of one another, they cannot by themselves orchestrate a sequential development of skills.

With support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, writing faculty at Bloomington High School, Normal Community High School, University High School, Illinois Central Community College, and Illinois State University are currently implementing a program designed to guide the development of students' writing abilities from grade ten through the freshman year in college. As we do so, we hope to overcome several special obstacles that have traditionally made articulation programs less effective than they might have been. Foremost among these problems is the tunnel vision that often afflicts those who teach at different educational levels. That is, secondary and post-secondary writing teachers too often see writing education solely in terms of the courses they teach in isolation and therefore lack a comprehensive frame of reference that will allow them to integrate their individual courses. Occasionally, these teachers try to cultivate a common perspective, but even on these occasions, their efforts are based on general discussions rather than shared teaching experiences.

As a result, these efforts produce, at best, a vague sense of how secondary and post-secondary writing courses can work together to cultivate a coherent learning experience.

A second major problem that can substantially undercut an otherwise promising articulation program is the failure of those participating to use research that will facilitate the achievement of an articulation program's goals. First, teachers involved in a writing articulation program should utilize research on the relationship between cognitive growth and the development of writing skills. Second, they must know the research on the nature of the writing process itself. This research awareness and application are essential if the teachers expect to create a continuous curriculum capable of directing the development of students' writing skills over a series of grade levels.

Finally, most articulation programs mistakenly promote a two-way interaction – between high school and community college teachers, between high school and university teachers, or between community college and university teachers. In fact, a comprehensive articulation program should be based on a three-way interaction among writing teachers at all three of these levels. Teachers at each level can offer a unique perspective on the teaching and learning of writing. Teachers at the other levels cannot afford to do without this perspective if they hope to develop a complete program for integrating secondary and post-secondary writing instruction.

The main activity of the Illinois State Project is a collaborative teaching program that will introduce writing teachers at different grade levels into each other's classes. Through this activity, we are creating an experience-based frame of reference that will help all of the participating teachers better understand what happens in writing courses at grade levels other than their own. We emphasize a broad frame of reference based on first-hand observations of each other's classes because without this direct exposure to each other's classes, the teachers interested in articulating their teaching will not know enough about writing courses other than their own to create a fluent sequence of skills. Teachers who approach articulation armed only with a knowledge of their own school's courses necessarily have a one-dimensional and short-term view of what must be, by definition, a multi-dimensional and long-term process. Collaborative teaching creates the opportunity for each teacher involved in the project to develop a multi-dimensional and long-term view of the process of learning to write and thus allows him or her to overcome the narrow vision that makes the sequential development of students' writing skills impossible.

To guide their in-class collaboration, all of the teachers in the project regularly meet out of class to investigate research on the relationship between cognitive growth and the maturation of writing skills. Specifically, we are concerned with research that will help us determine how writing courses at successive grade levels can be shaped to accommodate the changing cognitive capacities of our students as they progress from one grade to the next. The research we study, combined with our shared in-class experiences, should help us to answer two sets of closely related questions: 1) how do students' cognitive abilities change from one grade to the next and how can their old skills with language be refined to fit new cognitive circumstances? and 2) what does teaching writing as a process entail and how should the process be cultivated at successive grade levels so that, over the long term, students will develop processes that will consistently serve them as they move from writing task to writing task, regardless of the task's complexity?

Most high school and college writing teachers know that, as students get older, they develop their ability to think at increasingly abstract levels. However, these teachers are typically less certain of the exact nature of the cognitive changes that students undergo as they move from their mid-high school through their early college years. As a result, high school and college writing curricula generally fail to respond precisely to the cognitive capabilities of the students for whom they are designed. They also fail to understand the possibilities for triggering advance cognitive levels. In order to tailor the curricula we develop through this project to the thinking abilities of the students enrolled in sophomore through college freshman writing courses, we are first of all relying on what the participating teachers have learned from years of teaching writing at their respective grade levels. Then, to organize, refine, and extend these first-hand impressions, we are examining recent research on the cognitive development of students in their mid-high school through their early college years, especially as this development relates to their ability to learn to write. Our study of the development of thinking processes is primarily focusing on the work of Piaget, Kohlberg, and Perry, and the work of Bereiter, Freedman and Pringle, Sternglass, and Wilkinson is helping us determine how changes in thinking processes should be accommodated in successive writing courses.

In addition to research on cognitive growth and the development of writing skills, we are also examining recent research on the nature of writing and its teaching. We cannot make the most of what we learn about the nature and development of human thought processes unless we understand intricately the process to which we expect to apply our newly acquired knowledge of cognitive development. So much research has been done in the last ten years on writing as a process that our first concern here involves selecting the best of it. In choosing the research to be examined, we are following three strategies: 1) we are selecting a handful of seminal studies that have had the greatest influence on the profession's perception of writing as a process, 2) we are identifying summary articles that represent the major conclusions of research on writing as a process in the last ten years, and 3) we are looking at studies that examine from a process perspective the more problematic aspects of the writing curriculum. By having participating teachers study this research together, we are developing a commonly accepted theoretical base for our activities and are minimizing the danger that much of the confusion over and misperceptions of what teaching writing as a process means will undermine the utility of what we do.

The special advantage to teaching collaboratively and investigating research at the same time is that the in-class work can

serve as a practical check on the viability of what is determined theoretically in our out-of-class sessions. In meetings conducted before the collaborative teaching got underway, we were able to settle on broad curricular principles that would guide our in-class work at each of the grade levels involved in the project. The meetings, conducted concurrently with the collaborative teaching, focused on developing day-to-day teaching strategies and approaches that the research we are examining suggests are most appropriate for teaching specific aspects of the compositive curriculum. Our examination of this research precedes its application by a week so that the specific strategies and approaches we agree on during one week's meetings will be implemented and tested in the following week's class sessions. The broad curricular principles established at the outset of the project give us a general direction; the specific tactics suggested by the research we explore in our weekly meetings allow us to realize in practice those initial principles.

In developing a program based on a three-way interaction among high school, community college, and university writing teachers, we are recognizing the variety of possible sequences that students follow in getting an education. Some students go from high school to a community college either to complete their education or to develop a basis for later entrance into a four-year college or a university. Other students go directly from high school to a four-year college or a university. If we are to develop an educational system sensitive to the needs of all of these students, we must simultaneously coordinate the perspectives on teaching writing at all of these levels. Writing courses at a community college should extend just as naturally from high school writing courses as writing courses at a four-year college or university do, and they should, at the same time, prepare many students for advance work at a four-year college or university. By having teachers from all of these levels explore current composition research together and by having them work together in each other's classes, we are creating a more multi-dimensional, and therefore a more widely useful, articulation program that has been developed up to this point. Further, by bringing to bear a greater variety of perspectives on teaching writing on the curricula we create, we inevitably enrich those curricula and make them more sensitive to student needs.

In order to formalize the conclusions reached through this project and to make them available to other high school, community college, and university writing teachers, project participants will develop, after a year of working together, a curriculum for each grade represented in the project and a teaching guide for each curriculum. Every curriculum will be designed to immediately improve the

writing skills of students at its grade level and, at the same time, to prepare those students for work in subsequent writing courses. The specific activities of each curriculum will reflect the kinds of thinking and writing tasks we have discovered to be most appropriate for its grade level and the rhetorical and grammatical complications that attend these tasks. In the guides developed for the project's curricula, the teachers will provide both a general rationale for each curriculum and a specific explanation for each activity recommended in that curriculum. Over the entire sequence of curricula, as the writing tasks become more cognitively demanding, annotations in the teaching guides will clarify how the activities in successive curricula are suited to the cognitive maturation of the students they are designed to serve.

Project administrators will determine the relative success of the project through two complementary strategies of evaluation. The first measure will involve a pre-test and a post-test of the writing abilities of students enrolled in courses using the project's curricula. Through the pre-tests and post-tests, we will be concerned both with determining the progress that students within a particular class have made and with estimating the degree to which the entire sequence of curricula facilitates a student's progress from one course to the next. A second means of evaluating the materials created through the project will entail having teachers who participated in the project, and others who did not, respond to questionnaires calculated to reveal how useful secondary and post-secondary writing teachers in general would find the curricula and teaching guides developed for their grade levels. In effect, the results of the pre-test and post-test phase of the evaluation will suggest the development of students via the project's materials while reactions to the questionnaires will describe the teachers' assessment of the materials.

A schedule for and general overview of project activities follows: 1) Phase One–July 1983 through August 1983–preliminary meetings are held to establish curricular guidelines for all courses involved in the project. 2) Phase Two–September 1983 through December 1983–participating teachers collaborate in teaching the freshman writing course at Illinois State University. Teachers are divided into teams of two or three, and each team collaborates in a separate section of the course; however, teachers compare notes and coordinate perspectives on the course in group meetings held weekly.

3) Phase Three–January 1984 through May 1984–participating teachers from Illinois State University go to the high school campuses and to Illinois Central College to teach collaboratively the writing courses at those schools. Each teaching team consists of two teachers —one from Illinois State and one from the host school. One course is

team taught at each of the participating high schools (at one high school a sophomore course, at a second a junior course, and at a third a senior course), and a university teacher teams up with the host teacher from Illinois Central College to teach that school's required freshman writing course. Again, weekly meetings are conducted to allow individual teams to consult with the entire group.

4) Phase Four–June 1984 through August 1984–the project's final curricula, teaching guides and testing materials are developed by all participating teachers. 5) Phase Five–September 1984 through December 1984–using the evaluation instruments developed during Phase Four, project administrators evaluate project materials. 6) Phase Six–January 1985 through May 1985–project administrators analyze the data from the evaluation activities of Phase Five, write the project's final report, and distribute project materials to interested teachers and schools.

Educators have specified a variety of causes for the failure of high school and college students to write at a level commensurate with their native intellectual abilities. Secondary and post-secondary writing teachers can control some of the causes that have been suggested more than they can others, but of all these causes, the least excusable is the one they can do the most about. That is, the least excusable cause and the one that teachers can most quickly redress is their failure to communicate as carefully and as rigorously as they should. The Rockefeller Commission's observation that writing skills must develop incrementally surprises no one who has spent much time in a writing class either at the high school or the college level. However, teachers at both levels have been slow to behave in a way consistent with this knowledge, and the efforts that have been exerted in this direction have too often been undermined by a failure to address some of the most imposing obstacles to effective articulation. Those associated with Illinois State's articulation program fully hope that the materials we develop will help to provide a basis for addressing these obstacles. In this way, we may help to promote a habit of meaningful communication among writing teachers in Illinois' high schools, community colleges, and universities.

Composition at Illinois State University: A Preliminary Assessment

MAURICE SCHARTON
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Copies of the Writing Assessment Questionnaire (see Appendix 1) were mailed to the entire Illinois State University faculty at the beginning of the Fall (1981) semester. The questionnaires were intended to survey, informally, faculty opinion concerning Illinois State University students' writing skills and to outline the uses to which faculty put writing assignments. We of the Writing Center staff plan to use the results in establishing tutorial practices and priorities. We mailed the questionnaire to 1089 faculty members; 415 (36.76%) returned the questionnaires. Of those, 63.86% chose the term "mediocre" to describe students' writing skills and 21.2% rated students' skills as "poor." Only 14.94% rated skills as "good" and not one of the 415 chose to rate students' skills as "excellent." We deliberately prevented fence-straddling on this issue by our use of an even rather than an odd number of possible answers, the top two clearly positive and the bottom two clearly negative. The sum of the bottom two responses indicates that slightly over 85% of the faculty are dissatisfied with students' writing.

We listed eleven categories of writing problems, asking faculty to mark those they found most frequently. The problems, in order of frequency indicated, are

1.	sentence structure	69.41%
2.	organization	67.71%
3.	spelling	62.41%
4.	grammar	62.17%
5.	punctuation	40.00%
6.	logic	38.55%
7.	development	37.35%
8.	word choice	31.33%
9.	research skills	26.99%
10.	jargon	12.04%
11.	audience analysis	9.63%

Items one through four were indicated by a majority of the respondents as problem areas. Since we cannot be certain how our

respondents understood the terms "grammar" and "sentence structure," we cannot be certain whether sentence structure meant stylistic infelicity or sentence boundary error to them; whether grammar included, for example, problems of agreement or, again, merely sentence boundaries. "Spelling" could include inflectional endings, which we would classify as a grammatical problem. With the understanding that such confusions may well have influenced the responses, we nevertheless feel relatively certain that matters of sentence structure and grammar are of most concern to our faculty since those were rated first and fourth. Interestingly, the two skills which ranked in the last two places – jargon (12.04%) and audience analysis (9.63%) – are emphasized in many composition courses and given entire chapters in some textbooks. Since they seem least important to the respondents, one might conclude that writing teachers are enjoying exceptional success in these areas. A more probable inference, however, is that jargon matters little to most professors (Joseph Williams's recent research, reported in *College English*, indicates that it is viewed as an asset by some audiences) and that the concept of audience analysis is unfamiliar to most of them, or obscured by other problems which they view as more important.

Essay tests (54.94%) and term papers (51.1%) were indicated by the majority of our respondents as types of assignments given. Discussion questions (37.11%) also ranked high. None of these responses surprised us, but the number and variety of responses to our "Other" category did surprise us. Along with the expected themes, abstracts, reports, and letters, came computer system specifications and designs, concert reports, mathematical problem sets, and lab reports.

We seem to have discovered an unexpectedly large constitutency for the cause of writing. In follow-up interviews we have planned, we will ask selected faculty members from the various disciplines to give us more in-depth information concerning the assignments they give. We hope to learn enough to offer more individualized help to students who come to the Writing Center and to provide information to our department curriculum planners.

Although we did not invite faculty to speculate concerning the causes of students' writing problems, several censured opinions: students' lack of experience or lack of respect for writing skills were mentioned as were faculty members' ineffectiveness as teachers of writing, the Writing Center's ineffectiveness, and English 101's ineffectiveness.

In the face of the difficulties and dissatisfactions, it may seem surprising that faculty make writing assignments at all. Nevertheless they do, and responses to our questionnaire indicate that they make

assignments at all levels, for diverse purposes, and with confidence that they are using a powerful instrument for teaching and learning (see responses to questions 4 and 6). Although there are persistent rumors that it is possible to get through school without writing papers after the freshman year, fewer than 4% of our respondents indicated that they made no writing assignments, while almost 25% indicated making 8 or more in a semester. Of course, it may be that those who do not make writing assignments did not return our questionnaires. Note however that comparable percentages of faculty responded from each of the University's five colleges. In addition, 237—over half—the respondents indicate that they assign term papers while 228 indicated that they give essay tests, forms of writing which place great demands on both faculty and students.

To our inquiry concerning the disadvantages of using writing assignments, 16.87% of our respondents answered that writing assignments are too time-consuming to grade, 9.16% felt that students have insufficient writing skills and 8.19% felt that writing was not relevant to their disciplines. A scattering of "other" responses indicated other possible lines of inquiry into this question. Plagiarism concerned two of our respondents, a third mentioned personal lack of confidence grading writing, a fourth felt that writing was not a good means of evaluation, and one expressed what we suppose to be aesthetic dissatisfaction with student writing: "Can't stand to read that garbage."

One group of responses to this question indicated concern about students' responses to writing assignments: negative course evaluations in consequence of giving writing assignments, students' feelings that writing is unimportant, and students' inability to recognize their own deficiencies.

While we have no doubt that the minority who choose not to make their students write are voicing sentiments held by some other faculty, it seems likely that those who do make students write represent at least as large a group. If we take the objection that writing is too time-consuming to grade as the most usual response, we still find that a majority of the faculty—in excess of 83%—are undaunted by the problems of writing instruction. It seems at least possible that the prevailing belief among English faculty, that we are lonely legionnaires on the barricades of literacy, may be less well founded than we had feared.

APPENDIX I
Writing Assessment Questionnaire

We are restructuring our system of instruction in an attempt to make the Writing Center more responsive to the needs of the University faculty. We should be grateful if you would take a moment to fill out the questionnaire and return it to the University Writing Center, Stevenson 410.

1) In general, I think my students' writing skills are
   a ____ excellent
   b ____ good
   c ____ mediocre
   d ____ poor

2) I make the following number of writing assignments per semester:
   a ____ 8 or more
   b ____ 4 - 7
   c ____ 1 - 3
   d ____ 0

   (if you check d., skip to question 5)

3) I make the following kinds of writing assignments.
   (check one or more)
   a ____ term papers
   b ____ discussion questions
   c ____ essay tests
   d ____ book reports
   e ____ other (please specify)

4) The courses in which I use writing assignments enroll mainly
   a ____ freshmen & sophomore
   b ____ juniors & seniors
   c ____ graduate students
   d ____ combinations of the above

5) I feel that students' major problem area(s) is (are):
   (check one or more)
   a ____ spelling
   b ____ organization
   c ____ grammar
   d ____ development
   e ____ punctuation
   f ____ word choice
   g ____ sentence structure
   h ____ logic
   i ____ research skills
   j ____ jargon
   k ____ audience analysis
   l ____ other (please specify)

6) I have the following reasons for giving writing assignments (check one or more)
   a ____ assists in learning or integrating factual material
   b ____ necessary skill in discipline
   c ____ good means of assessing learning
   d ____ other (please specify)

7) I have the following reason(s) for *not* giving writing assignments (check one or more)
   a ____ not relevant to my discipline
   b ____ too time-consumer to grade
   c ____ students have insufficient writing skills
   d ____ other (please specify)

8) I should like to a ____ increase the amount of writing in my courses.
   b ____ decrease
   c ____ maintain

9) If you wish, make additional comments on the reverse of the questionnaire.

APPENDIX II
Summary of Responses to Writing Assessment Questionnaire

Of 415 usable responses to the mailing of 1089, the Writing Assessment questionnaire yielded the following statistics:

1) Faculty opinions of students' writing skills:

a.	excellent	0	
b.	good	62	14.94%
c.	mediocre	265	63.86%
d.	poor	88	21.20%

2) Number of writing assignments faculty make per semester:

a.	8 or more	103	24.82%
b.	4 - 7	131	31.57%
c.	1 - 3	165	39.76%
d.	0	16	3.86%

3) Types of writing assignments made (more than one response possible):

a.	term papers	237	51.10%
b.	discussion questions	154	37.11%
c.	essay tests	228	54.94%
d.	book reports	78	18.80%
e.	other	116	27.95% (please see attached sheets)

4) Writing assignments made in courses enrolling mainly:

a.	freshmen & sophomores	82	19.76%
b.	juniors & seniors	206	49.64%
c.	graduate students	87	20.96%
d.	combination	40	9.64%

5) Students' major problem areas (more than one response possible):

a.	spelling	259	62.41%
b.	organization	281	67.71%
c.	grammar	258	62.17%
d.	development	155	37.35%
e.	punctuation	166	40.00%
f.	word choice	130	31.33%
g.	sentence structure	288	69.41%
h.	logic	160	38.55%
i.	research skills	112	26.99%
j.	jargon	50	12.04%
k.	audience analysis	40	9.63%

6) Reasons for giving writing assignments (more than one response possible):

a.	assists in learning or integrating factual material	269	64.82%
b.	necessary skill in the discipline	263	63.37%
c.	good means of assessing learning	233	56.14%

7) Reasons for not giving writing assignments (more than one response possible):

a.	not relevant to discipline	34	8.19%
b.	too time-consuming to grade	70	16.87%
c.	students have insufficient writing skills	38	9.16%

8) Amount of writing assignments faculty would like to make:

a. An increased amount	91	21.93%
b. A decreased amount	3	0.72%
c. the same amount	275	66.27%

Other types of writing assignments given (response to question #3):

specific topics and problems; e.g., arbitration cases, applying a technique or method to a problem
summaries of current articles
mathematical problem sets (2)
computer system specifications and designs
proofs
critical analyses
abstracts of articles
news stories and memoranda (2)
math homework
critiques of journal articles (2)
outlines, feature stories
lab reports
problems
lesson plans, evaluations
journal reports
themes
research summaries (2)
business reports
case analyses (2)
short papers throughout the semester
comparison papers
business letters
research proposals
review of literature
written projects, critiques
personal experience statements
theses
observations reports
programming assignments
music reports, analyses
literary analysis

Other types of writing assignments (continued):

interpretive exercises
unit plans
LTD prep guides
papers to support class discussions
concert reports
technical papers
creative writing
weekly reports on student teaching

Other reasons for giving writing assignments (responses to question #6):

assignments of problem sets are necessary to determine students' skills in synthesizing mathematical concepts
to improve analytical ability
learn and appreciate issues and developments in the discipline
developing personal/professional expressive skills via research materials
they must be able to express ideas in writing and not merely by performance (creativity)
how students respond to art work
provides faculty guided learning experience

Other reasons for giving writing assignments (continued):

provides celebration of the intelligence of others
critical evaluation of author's argument
synthesizes knowledge to solve a practical problem
necessary skills in the working world
teaches expression of idea
mark of an educated person
clarifies thinking
develops thinking and creative processes
students need practice
to encourage creativity, to give depth to participation exercises, to find out more about my students, to encourage risk taking for those who are shy in class
only way to get them to internalize course problems

Other reasons for *not* giving writing assignments (responses to question #7):

can't stand to read that garbage

too many students

not comfortable grading writing

not a good means of evaluation

copying and plagiarism

take-home assignments result in cheating among lower division students

affects teacher evaluations

700 students, impossible to read

Responses to Question #9:

I answered this questionnaire in light of the graduate students that I have in art. This particular semester I do not have a graduate course calling for writing skills, but other semesters — on and off — I do. I also direct, or serve on, thesis and dissertation committees. Finally, I teach two large lecture sections (Art Appreciation and Humanities I) in which writing is not required.

I should like to increase the quality of writing.

Classes too big for individual help.

Teaching load too heavy.

Students need more experience in writing. We should not have to teach basic writing skills.

Most students cannot write competently—the University has not lived up to its responsibility.

Couple 101 with another course so student writes same paper for each—weak student thus gains experience of writing one good paper.

Minimum competency standards should be developed.

Too many classes; writing center helpful.

Concerned about transfer upperclassmen who cannot write.

Can you provide seminars/workshops for students and faculty about writing?

All students lack basic research skills.

Students have no respect for writing skills.

Teachers need to *demand* good writing skills from students.

Writing Center is not effective.

Poor writing skills represent greatest defect of ISU students.

More required courses in writing needed.

Responses to Question #9 (continued):

Great range in ability.

Black English a problem.

Future teachers can't write.

Math students need writing skills too.

Science students have difficulty writing.

Writing Center is effective—use it more.

Students do not recognize deficiencies.

Students do not feel basic writing skills are important.

Students cannot write after passing 101.

Information about writing service to new faculty.

Many diction problems.

Teaching load too heavy.

Essay tests should be given more.

Term papers required by grads are often the first one that s/he has written.

Need more publicity for the Writing Center.

Term paper experience lacking.

I do not teach courses which require these kinds of assignment.

Many faculty members deficient in writing skills and are not working with students.

Grading too much work in large classes.

Need entrance test to determine students' deficiencies.

Standards for passing 101 should be raised.

I see students' writing mostly on the course evaluations.

Any way to help future teachers express themselves is imperative/appreciated.

While you may not think of math as writing, remember an equation is a declarative sentence.

Demographic Analysis of Respondents

College of Applied Science and Technology TOTAL = 74
(30.86% of total CAST faculty)

Animal Science	1
Industrial Tech	17
Physical Education	23
Dance	2
Medical Tech	1

Agricultural Mech	1
Environmental Health	1
Health Education	3
ACS	7
Plant & Soil	1
Medical Records	2
Corrections	4
Agricultural Ed,	1
Agricultural Econ	2
Home Ec	8

College of Arts and Sciences

TOTAL = 199
(38.27% of Total A&S faculty)

Mathematics	22
Economics	11
Philosophy	8
English	37
Spanish	2
Biological Science	2
History	15
Physiology	1
Anthropology	1
Zoology	2
Genetics	1
Mycology	1
Microbiology	1
Geology	2
Poli Sci	12
Quantitive Anal.	1
French	2
Social Work	7
Communication	15
Botany	2
Psychology	20
Chemistry	6
Physics	4
Sociology	11

College of Arts and Sciences (continued)

Geography	7
Classics	1
Russian	1
Vertebrate Zo	1
Anatomy	1
Ecology	2

College of Business		TOTAL = 47 (37.9% of total Business faculty)
Business Law	1	
Accounting	11	
BEA	15	
Finance	1	
Marketing	7	
Management	8	
College of Education		TOTAL = 49 (39.84% of total Education faculty)
Education	35	
Special Ed	4	
Elementary Ed	2	
Speech Path & Aud	8	
College of Fine Arts		TOTAL = 45 (35.71% of total FA faculty)
Art	22	
Music	11	
Theatre	8	
CAST	74	
A&S	199	
BUS	47	
ED	49	
FA	45	
Military Science	1	
	415	

Composition Evaluation: Holistic Scoring

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DES PLAINES

To evaluate the effectiveness of our composition instruction, the Maine West English Department decided to use the holistic method of theme evaluation developed by the Educational Testing Service. In the holistic method, students write on a given topic, identifying

their papers by a code number rather than by name. The chief evaluator then mixes and gives them to a chief reader (in this case, the department chairman) who selects samples which display a full range of response, going from a score of 1 (low) to 4 (high). The chief reader then codes, duplicates, and distributes the samples without comment to the rest of the staff who will serve as readers.

The first six or seven samples, ranging from 1 to 4, are read silently and scored by the readers. Using a blackboard, the chief reader asks for the readers' responses to the selected samples, asking how many gave sample X, for example, a 1, 2, 3, or 4. The chief reader then asks how many gave a 1, 2, 3, or 4 to sample Y, and so on through the samples. Putting the results on the board, he may get a chart something like the following:

Sample	*Readers' Scores*				
	1	2	3	4	
X	6	18	5	3	responses of 32 readers
Y	12	16	4	0	
L	0	3	15	14	
T	5	13	10	4	
S	13	13	5	1	
B	10	14	7	1	
Q	4	11	12	5	

At this point, the chief reader asks for a discussion about the scores given. Notice that the readers seemed to be in agreement on samples X, Y, L, S, and B. Samples X, Y, S, and B seem to be lower half papers; sample L is clearly an upper half paper. The chief reader then asks those readers who scored sample X a 3 or 4 to give their reasons for their scores. Similarly, he asks the one reader why he scored sample S a 4. The amazing fact is that there would already be such agreement even without a discussion about what constitutes a "good" paper.

Samples T and Q are also validly scored. While almost half the readers regarded the samples as upper half papers, the other half considered them lower half. But the difference between any two adjacent scores (1-2, 2-3, 3-4) is not really significant. The apparent discrepancy is resolved by the fact that each paper will be read *twice*.

Any paper that had extremely divergent scores, like the following, for example, would certainly be the subject of group discussion:

	Readers' Scores			
	1	2	3	4
Sample K	9	7	8	8

The chief reader might at this point indicate the scores he originally assigned to the sample. In so doing, however, he would never impose his scoring as the "correct" evaluation. In this holistic method, the group determines the standards by which papers will be evaluated. Thus, although the chief reader may have scored sample B a 3, the group clearly saw it as a lower half paper, and that is the score that should be assigned to it.

After the discussions about these samples, readers change their scores more or less to conform to the scores agreed upon by consensus. The chief reader then distributes three or four additional samples and asks for consensus. Using the first seven samples as "touchstones," readers should be pretty much in agreement about the scores for these samples.

The chief reader would distribute additional samples until he felt the readers had developed a good, consistent "feel" for the scoring, always referring to those samples on which agreement had already been reached.

When the chief reader feels the readers are ready, the remaining papers are distributed, usually in folders containing twenty to twenty-five papers each. Each reader would also be given a card which has that reader's special code for scoring. For example, one reader might have this code:

1	2	3	4
X	B	T	O

while another reader might have this code:

1	2	3	4
Q	C	G	L

By using letters rather than numbers, readers are not influenced by the "halo" effect.

When each paper has been read twice, an assistant using a master code list checks the scores to locate any papers whose scores are more than one point apart. Thus (using the table above) a paper scored B-Q, G-O, or T-C would be acceptable, while a paper scored Q-T would have to be given to a third reader whose score would determine the acceptable evaluation for this paper and resolve the discrepancy of a two-point spread.

At our January workshop, I explained this procedure to the twenty-six members of the Maine West English Department. In May, we used this procedure on our junior and freshmen classes. Four hundred eighty-two juniors and three hundred ninety-five freshmen wrote on the same topic on the assigned day. Twenty teachers did the scoring while I and two reading teachers handled the collection and

re-distribution of papers, as well as the check for discrepancies. One outstanding feature of the holistic method for scoring is that all eight hundred and seventy-seven papers were read and scored *twice* in two and one-half hours.

The distribution of scores for the May reading produced the following table:[1]

TABLE 1

	1	2	3	4
each paper read twice	(1,1)	(1,2; 2,2)	(2,3; 3,3)	(3,4; 4,4)
			98/275 = 36%	15/86 = 18%
9th grade	127/188 = 68%	155/238 = 47%		
				71/86 = 82%
11th grade	61/188 = 32%	173/328 = 53%	177/275 = 64%	
	188	328	275	86

385 9th grade papers
492 11th grade papers
877

M A Y 1980

[1]Since each paper was scored twice, the lowest possible score would be 1-1. The next score would be 1-2, or 2-2; then 2-3, 3-3; then 3-4, 4-4. These scores would then represent the gradations in the larger 1 to 4 range.

As the table indicates, 68% of all papers in the "1" category had been written by freshmen, while 28% of the "4" category were junior papers. Using the mutually agreed upon standards of the sample papers, the readers by their scoring did in fact indicate that the junior papers scored higher than the freshman papers. The holistic scoring of these intermixed, unidentified papers supported our belief that the efforts of our composition program were being rewarded.

We recognized that the results of this scoring should not be used inappropriately. For example, we would not record these scores as grades; a "4" paper was not an "A", nor was a "1" paper a "D" or "F." We concurred that a close analytical reading of each paper, including teacher proofreading and student revision, was still the best

way to provide for, and to evaluate, individual student preformance. We agreed that the holistic method for scoring was an appropriate way for a teacher to get a "feel" for the general quality of a writing assignment and thus could be of great aid by allowing the teacher to assign more compositions without getting buried under a paper load demanding the time and effort associated with the analytic approach. Another advantage of holistic scoring is the fact that it can be explained to individual classes and used by them from time to time to evaluate each other's work without becoming bogged down in a witch hunt for dangling participles.

The Test of Standard Written English and other objective tests may assess a student's grasp of mechanics and usage, but only a written composition allows him or her to demonstrate his or her understanding of both grammatical and rhetorical skills. Teachers need some way to evaluate the quality of written work without being trapped by their own prejudices or inundated with papers. Holistic scoring provides that way.

A Method of Motivating Students to Write Meaningful Papers

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One of the concerns expressed by many teachers of composition, aside from lack of mechanical skills, is the absence of specific content and student involvement in paper assignments, a problem that both high school and college composition teachers perceive as a real stumblingblock to the production of above average papers, and one which I have faced with college freshmen in my composition classes. While we can counteract the problem of mechanical errors in several ways, many of us are still searching for a method to motivate students to put the necessary time, effort, and thought into their papers so that both students and teachers are more satisfied with the results. One obvious problem is that students either are assigned topics or choose topics merely to satisfy a specific paper assignment. However, even those who have chosen a viable topic are often faced with the problem of generating content. As a solution, many heuristic devices have been developed and adapted to aid students in discovering what

they already know or to encourage them to think creatively about their topic.

After trying several approaches, I have discovered a technique which not only gets the students involved in assignments but also encourages them to produce meaningful papers. Very simply, I adapted Janice Lauer's suggestion of using an area of dissonance with which the student is faced and combined it with Jacqueline Berke's Twenty Questions for the Writer as a system of invention. Actually, the method of invention used is not as important as the fact that they employ a systematic approach to discover content. The assignment is to choose an area of dissonance and write three papers—extended definition, comparison and contrast, and cause to effect—using the Twenty Questions to discover content.

Basically, the idea behind Lauer's use of an area of dissonance is for students to pick topics which are relevant to them and about which they know a great deal and perhaps are in the process of forming an opinion. In "The Rhetorical Approach: Stages of Writing and Strategies for Writers" (*Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition*, NCTE, 1980), she states, "Writing instructors should try to pose writing contexts in which students can find *personal* exigencies." As outlined in more detail in *The Four Worlds of Writing* (Harper & Row, 1981), students are instructed to keep two guidelines in mind when selecting a topic on which to write: it should be an issue that has entered their lives or the lives of those close to them, and one that is open to their deeper investigation or not closed by prejudice. The starting point is to identify aspects of the issue that challenge the writer's values or interpretation of the world and then to formulate a question that points this exploration toward the desired probable judgment. Often, at least in this stage, students are not yet ready to formulate a probable answer; some resolution is often discovered during the investigation process.

Since each student is writing on a personal issue, the topics in my classes vary greatly. Some examples include: teenage marriage (by a student who was contemplating marriage at age 19), romantic love (by a student having trouble with her boyfriend), excessive drinking (by the daughter of an alcoholic), suicide (by a student whose friend recently committed suicide), and the relationship between coach and athlete (by a student who quit the track team because of a personality clash). Most of the topics were of this personal nature, but others were most distant: the economy of the United States, understanding different religious beliefs, and the need for conservation. I found that students should be encouraged to choose topics in which they are personally involved; feedback from writers who chose topics relevant to their lives indicates that they got more out of the assignment than

these who did not—perhaps because they put more effort into their papers and were motivated to write.

The obvious advantages to using an area of dissonance as a starting point are that the student is writing on an area of immediate and personal concern, has some experience with the topic and thus can generate content, and is interested in resolving or understanding the issue. Hence, students are motivated to discover and to write. Moreover, because every student is writing on a different topic, the papers are much more interesting to read; in fact, I found myself actually looking forward to reading the next group of papers to gauge progress towards understanding and resolution. The disadvantages are minimal and can be overcome by proper presentation by the instructor. Students who may become bored with writing three papers about one topic, for example, often have not thought carefully enough about it; therefore, the teacher should give guidance in topic selection. Since the student may already be in the beginning stages of formulating a resolution, s/he may need some guidance in using the invention system creatively to consider all aspects of the problem. Overall, the advantages of such an assignment greatly outweigh these disadvantages.

I have used this technique for the second, third and fourth papers (out of a total of eight assigned for the semester). Three weeks before their second paper (the first in this series) is due, I give the assignment, which is to identify an area of dissonance in their lives which meets the criteria outlined by Lauer. Since this is a new term to many, it is necessary to expand upon what "dissonance" means. I have been loath to suggest topics because it is important that each student select a topic of individual interest and concern. If we use a list of suggested topics, many students will simply take the easy way out and choose one of those, and it is important that the student be motivated to write about an area of personal exigency. They are then instructed to generate information about their topic using Berke's Twenty Questions.

As a class, we go through the invention system with a sample topic. I tell the students about my own area of dissonance, which not only serves as a sample topic but also encourages them to share their own experiences in their papers. I have found Berke's text *Twenty Questions for the Writer* (3rd ed., Harcourt, 1981) a helpful guide. This step is so important that I allocate at least one class period so they can respond to the questions using their area of dissonance. During this time, I circulate and help each student use the Twenty Questions creatively. The questions, listed below, are relatively simple but open up whole new areas about the topic:

1. What does X mean?
2. How can X be described?
3. What are the component parts of X?
4. How is X made or done?
5. How should X be made or done?
6. What is the essential function of X?
7. What are the causes of X?
8. What are the consequences of X?
9. What are the types of X?
10. How does X compare to Y?
11. What is the present status of X?
12. How should X be interpreted?
13. What are the facts about X?
14. How did X happen?
15. What kind of person is X?
16. What is my personal response to X?
17. What is my memory of X?
18. What is the value of X?
19. How can X be summarized?
20. What case can be made for or against X?

Again, some teacher guidance is necessary to encourage creativity. As a general requirement, I ask that they generate at least four pages of material. The students are told prior to the first assignment in this series that the modes they will be using are extended definition, comparison and contrast, and cause to effect. Naturally, at the appropriate time I explain in detail the various techniques or organization and analyze models of the three modes.

The topics vary widely in each class. For purposes of illustration, let us follow one student through the process of choosing an area of dissonance, discovering ideas about that topic, and then writing the three papers. She decided to write on the topic of working mothers because her mother recently began working outside the home on a full-time basis and she was concerned about how this change would affect her grade school-age sister. Possible answers to the Twenty Questions are as follows:

1. What does X (working mothers) mean? If a mother works outside the home, it means that she now has other interests which may become more important to her than her family. This could be a threat to the children's perception of family stability and security. Having a mother work outside the home means that often chores are either allocated to other members of the family or perhaps left undone. For example, I may have to iron my own clothes and find other means of transportation to activities.

2. How can X (working mothers) be described? All sorts of women decide to work for various reasons—financial necessity, personal enrichment, boredom with the routine of taking care of the home.

3. What are the component parts of X (working mothers)? A mother who decides to work has new facets to her life. She is not only a mother and a housekeeper, she is also a professional woman, a secretary, an office worker. Perhaps she is now using her education, which may have lain dormant, or perhaps she has had to return to school to learn new skills.

10. How does X (working mothers) compare to Y (non-working mothers)? Since my mother began working she seems a happier person because she is doing new and interesting things, but at the same time, she seems more harried and often has less time for her family, particularly my little sister. She can be compared to my friend's non-working mother, who also has a younger child at home, in various ways (and then list them). And so on.

While our students may not be writing answers this complete on their first try, with some guidance and encouragement, they should be able to generate similar ideas. They should be encouraged to write their answers in complete sentences, which serve not only to clarify thoughts but also provide possible topic sentences. Students should not try to mold their responses to the assigned modes because they may reject or overlook some relevant information. To counteract this tendency, the modes could be assigned after their invention is well under way. In fact, I have introduced the assignment using both methods and found that students generate more content if the modes are assigned after they have begun their invention. In this way, they are searching for content, not trying to write a specific type of paper to fulfill an assignment.

Taking again the topic of working mothers, the topic could be discussed in several ways. Using the mode of extended definition, the thesis statement could read: There are many types of working mothers and one should not try to stereotype them. The paper could then discuss the various types of women who decide to work outside the home. Similarly, a comparison/contrast paper could explore the differences and similarities between a woman who now works and her previous existence. For example, Although my family has gained some advantages by my mother working full-time, I feel that the disadvantages are more important. Or, of course, one could argue the contrary. The cause to effect paper could take several different directions as expressed in the following thesis sentences: Since my mother decided to work full-time, our family life has been disrupted in many ways; or, Although I have some reservations about her decision, I know that my mother decided to work for the following

reasons; or, even more simply, Because my mother has decided to work, my sister's adolescence will be different from mine. Many students will arrive at a resolution to their area of dissonance. Although this particular student did not, she did indicate that "it was good to be able to express many of the feelings that I have." And certainly this aspect of the writing process should not be ignored.

At this stage, the whole assignment may sound as though it belongs in counseling services rather than the English department. After all, the stated purpose of any introductory composition course is to teach students to write expository compositions, not necessarily to change their lives. I feel, though, that arriving at some understanding of an area of dissonance is important to students because they become more motivated in their writing. While we must not lose sight of the fact that we teach composition, this aspect of the assignment is worthwhile because, in addition to learning to write, students learn something about themselves.

To gauge more completely student response to this exercise, I asked them to respond anonymously to the following questions after the completion of the series of papers:

1. What is your area of dissonance?
2. Why did you choose it?
3. Did the Twenty Questions help you generate information?
4. Did you have problems fitting the topic to the modes of extended definition, comparison/contrast, and cause to effect? If so, what were they?
5. Did you find writing on the same topic tedious or boring?
6. Did writing three papers about your area of dissonance help you understand the problem or arrive at a resolution? If yes, please explain how. If not, why not?
7. Would you like to do the same type of exercise using another topic? Why or why not?

Because the open-ended questionnaire does not lend itself to statistical analysis, and because a self-report system lends itself to questionable validity, the following is only a synopsis of student responses. Generally, all reported that the Twenty Questions helped them to generate content. Few reported difficulties fitting their topics to the various modes. About half of the students reported that writing on the same topic was tedious or boring, mainly because they found the paper repetitious. On the other hand, many students reported that being assigned to write three papers on the same topic prompted them to become more creative and to engage in deeper examination. As one student acknowledged, the assignment allowed

enough room for flexibility so that different aspects of the problem could be considered. Some students responded unfavorably to further use of such an exercise, primarily because they anticipated writing papers on varied topics. On the other hand, many students responded favorably stating: "This exercise gives you the opportunity to look at the topic objectively helping you to solve it," "It provides a topic for each paper and you don't have to figure out a new one each time," "It makes it easier to write the papers and now I think I could come up with a better topic," and "It is less stressful to use the same topic as opposed to thinking of an entirely new one and trying to get information in a short time." One student may have voiced the feelings of many about another such assignment: "Yes, because it would be good for me; no, because I am lazy."

Student comments indicate that this technique proved worthwhile because it provoked personal involvement. The teacher could combat anticipated lack of purpose and motivation by prompting students to be more creative about the ways they choose their thesis statements for individual papers so that each is an entirely new aspect to the topic. Also, they need to be urged to use an area of personal exigency.

An additional benefit of this assignment is indicated in their responses to the question, Did this assignment help you to resolve or better understand the area of dissonance? A substantial majority indicated that they were now able to understand and view their problem objectively, even though some indicated that they had not yet resolved it. As one student pointed out, "I didn't really arrive at a resolution but it was good to be able to express many of my feelings." And certainly this cathartic effect is one of the reasons why we express ourself in writing. Some students did arrive at a better understanding: "It made me realize that being a parent is really tough, so I don't blame them for doing some of the things that they do," and "I now know that I can admit my faults to my mother and that I can try to change them." Several responses indicate that the students were using this exercise as a vehicle for further growth. A typical response was, "I saw that there is a much greater need for conservation than I thought there was. The problem is very complex and involved and I think that I am even more confused now, but this is good. The more I wonder, the more I find out." And as one student indicated, "It is a good idea if you end up helping only one person. We would write on something anyways, so why not try to help someone also."

While some instructors may feel that these benefits fall outside the purview of the composition course, I believe that they do not because our students are still growing and maturing. If an exercise such as this will help, we need more such assignments to help them become

aware adults. A short-term benefit is that the students are writing better papers, but perhaps the long-term benefit is more important: students have learned that writing is a vehicle for learning and for self-expression. Hopefully, they will carry this concept with them out of the composition classroom.

The Writing Processes of Fourth-Fifth Graders

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A number of researchers have been studying the writing processes of students at various grade levels. Probably the first in this important area was Janet Emig's case study of eight high school students, called *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*[1]. She found that they used different methods, depending on whether or not they were writing to fulfill short-term school assignments or to satisfy a personal desire over the long term to write something for themselves. In addition, she discovered essentially six steps in their composing process for school assignments: prewriting and planning, starting, composing aloud, stopping, contemplating the product, and reformulating. Sondra Perl[2], focusing on five unskilled college writers, described three stages in the writing process: prewriting, writing, and editing. Although it would be impossible to list all her findings, these seem very important: poor writers spend little time planning; composing does not develop in a straightforward, linear fashion; composing always involves some construction and discovery; editing occurs so often that it breaks down the rhythm of the prose; and editing, for the student, is merely error-hunting.

Additional work has been done recently on the writing process by Linda Flower and John Hayes on graduate students and undergraduates and by Donald Graves on elementary school children. Flower and Hayes[3] have been examining business administration students using a technique called protocol analysis, a description of a writer's activities when composing. They broke the process into still more steps — generating ideas, organizing the material, eliminating the unimportant ideas from those generated, translating these ideas into acceptable written sentences, rewriting for improvement, and

finally editing. Donald Graves[4] has been following the writing development of sixteen children: eight from grade one through grade two and eight from grade three through grade four. Among his findings were the following: beginners and professionals have three steps in their writing process: prewriting, writing, and revision; first graders revise very little; writers need distance or objectivity to detect errors; and they discover their meaning while they write because "they think and play on paper" (p. 834).

As important as the above work may be in understanding how people write, many questions remain unanswered, not only about the process, but also about the techniques for studying it. For example, three of the researchers examined a small number of students (Emig, 8; Perl, 5; and Graves, 16), while Flower and Hayes have never indicated their sample size. Have sufficient numbers been studied to make recommendations for improving instruction? Moreover, are these subjects—middle-class high school students, weak college writers, a group of typical first and third graders, and some students at a prestigious business school—sufficiently representative for drawing conclusions on a broad scale? The answer is probably negative, and none of the scholars would make such a claim. Third, although protocol analysis or the case study method has been gaining in popularity, could it stimulate responses that would be made naturally in a nontest situation? Finally, except for the work of Donald Graves, all these researchers have looked at subjects who were writing on the spot. Thus, they were investigating impromptu writing processes. Are these the same as or different from strategies used by students when they are not under the pressure to produce at a given time for an artificial situation?

In an attempt to deal with some of these problems, a new study was conducted to examine the writing processes of 37 fourth and 22 fifth graders (N = 59) in a middle-class suburban elementary school district. Instead of *using* protocol analysis which would have been extremely time consuming with this large sample, a *questionnaire* was written covering various aspects of composition in a nontest or nonschool setting. The researcher took the questionnaires to the three classrooms (two fourth and one fifth) where he explained them thoroughly and asked the students to complete them while he waited to answer any questions which might arise. The purpose of this study, in contrast to those cited earlier, was to fill gaps between our knowledge of first grade and high school writers. Besides questioning a larger sample than the other studies, the researcher was interested in how students wrote in nonschool settings.

Specifically, this study was designed to answer the following questions.

1. Do fourth-fifth graders plan what they write? If so, do they plan before or when they commence writing?
2. During their free time, when do they prefer to write?
3. When they have a choice, where do they prefer to write?
4. Given a pen or pencil, which would they pick for writing?
5. To what extent do youngsters of this age revise their work?
6. Although quiet is assumed to be a requirement for writing, do children find certain sounds more annoying than others?
7. Do children proofread their papers?
8. Is composing for fourth-fifth graders a solitary activity or do they involve others in their work?

When asked if they planned what they wrote, the children in this study gave a mixture of responses. Seventeen (28%) said that they plan before they write; thirty-two (54%) write and plan at the same time; eight (12%) confessed that they used both procedures (planned before and during writing); and two students never wrote at home. These findings are interesting for two reasons. First, the response of the majority of the students corresponds to the findings of Graves and Perl who discovered that writing, to some degree, is often a matter of discovery. Students write in order to discover what they have to say. Second, if writing depends so much upon unplanned behavior, to what extent is instruction in organizing and planning compositions worthwhile? Further research might examine whether or not the amount of planning needed is affected by the maturity of the students, the type of assignments, or the individual. For example, do competent, mature writers use more planning than younger children? Does a narrative assignment call for much less planning than an expository one? By nature, do some people naturally prefer or need to plan what they have to say more than others, given the same level of experience and the same kind of assignment?

None of the four studies cited above dealt with when writers prefer to compose. In fact, many teachers and researchers act as if writing is a process which can be turned off or on at will, as if students can write upon demand without affecting their performance. As a matter of common knowledge, however, most people who write a great deal find that certain times of the day, conditions, and places stimulate them to do their best work. In short, although some people may appear to be able to write on demand, they really would prefer particular conditions. In this study, the fourth and fifth graders were given five categories to choose from: "after school," "before dinner," "after dinner," "before bed," and "other." When the tabulation was done, the first two categories were lumped together, as were the third and fourth. Because students gave several responses, the figures do

not total 59, but more than 50 percent of the students preferred writing after dinner while a percentage almost as large wrote immediately after school. Only three students felt they could compose any time, and one found the morning most desirable. Perhaps another category covering the morning would have encouraged more students to select it, but the researcher assumed that most would not write on the weekends, and would not, therefore, have mornings usually available to them.

Since most people write at a desk or a table out of choice or necessity, some teachers and researchers probably assume that any less formal arrangement would not be comfortable or stimulating. Nevertheless, according to his biographer, Hemingway sometimes composed standing, using a refrigerator top as his desk. In this study, almost one-third of the students preferred such informal positions as the floor (12), bed (9), a comfortable chair (2), a couch (2), and a bean bag chair (1). Perhaps the most important conclusion to be drawn from the data is that a relatively large number of students did not prefer a desk or table for writing. As a consequence, at least for them a typical classroom setting might inhibit them from producing their best work.

Most people assume that quiet is an important ingredient when someone is trying to compose. Parents are perplexed when their children try to do their homework while listening to the latest popular music from a radio or watching their favorite program on TV. However, could these same so-called distractors actually stimulate some people to write? For instance, a professional writer known to this researcher finds that he writes best in a place like a college cafeteria where he is surrounded by the voices and sounds of people talking and eating. He is unable to produce in a totally quiet environment like his room or library. According to the findings in this study, some students were bothered by various sounds but not by others. However, they were most disturbed by people talking and least annoyed by sounds of a radio. Note the question and responses below:

Would any of the following bother you when you are trying to write?

TV	Yes - 28 (47%)	No - 29 (49%)	Sometimes 2 (3%)
Radio	Yes - 16 (27%)	No - 43 (72%)	Sometimes - 0
People Talking	Yes - 30 (50%)	No - 27 (45%)	Sometimes 2 (3%)

If the responses from the children accurately reflect their behavior, we can probably say that about half of the youngsters sampled were disturbed by noises when they tried to write; they were

most affected by people talking and television and least by the radio. On the other hand, apparently about half of the children did not find these sounds or noise offensive when they tried to compose. These responses are similar to those of professional writers who, according to the *New York Times*, rent special apartments where they do nothing except write; these accommodations are selected primarily on the basis of either the absence of presence of noise.[5] The findings in this study suggest that writing is a personal act which may or may not require silence for satisfactory work.

As Marlene Scardamalia[6], Donald Graves, and others have found, writers have great psychological difficulty revising their work for many reasons, and the former even suggests that students should be encouraged to use pencils to make the process as simple and painless as possible. Scardamalia implies that youngsters write too often with pens, and therefore, they don't revise as much as they should. When children in this study were asked to state their preferred writing instrument, ten (16%) chose a pen, thirty-six (61%) a pencil, and thirteen (22%) both. Again the authenticity of the responses is always a puzzle because the children may have responded in the way which seemed to be the most mature to them. "Adults use pens; children write with pencils. Since I want to be mature, I will respond with 'pen'." Moreover, revising and editing may be more heavily related to habit and instruction than to choice of writing instrument. The results of this questionnaire suggest that most students, at least in this age bracket, customarily prefer pencils, but a few more might be encouraged to do likewise.

In order to gain more insight into the revision habits of these youngsters, they were asked how many versions were generally written for each of their papers. It was assumed that recopying would involve, in some instances, not just improving the handwriting but also improving the writing. Sixteen (27%) said they recopy their work, thirty-four (57%) submit their first draft, and nine (15%) sometimes do both. The figures indicate that, like Graves' subjects, these fourth-fifth graders apparently do little revising. To gather some information about their editing habits, the students were asked if they reread their papers before submitting their work. Thirty-eight (64%) said they read over their work, three (5%) said they don't, and eighteen (30%) said they do so sometimes. Of those who reread their papers, forty-three (72%) do so silently, four (7%) read out loud, and six (11%) use both techniques. These figures suggest that a new emphasis in the classroom should be placed on oral editing practices to detect problems which are not apparent in silent reading. For instance, wordy, awkward or repetitious phrasing can be detected more easily if the material is read orally than read silently.

As others have pointed out, distance is required by writers for them to look objectively at their work and make changes or improvements in it. One way to achieve distance is to allow time to lapse between the writing and rewriting stages, and another is to allow others to read and criticize one's work. Sometimes, then, friends or relatives can serve as critics of writing and suggest changes that the writer might never see or see only after a long period of time. In evaluating this notion, the students were asked the following question:

> Do you have one of your parents or brothers or sisters read what you have written?

Surprisingly, thirty-one (52%) students have someone else read their work, twenty-five (42%) never do so, and three (5%) do sometimes. "Parents" and "mothers" are the most popular readers for the papers.

In summary, this paper has described several aspects of the writing processes of fourth-fifth graders. The purpose of this work was to analyze the responses to a questionnaire on writing in nontest situations given to a relatively large, representative group of students of an age not studied previously. According to the findings, most children in this study planned as they wrote, supporting the work of Graves. They preferred to compose in the late afternoon or early evening, but the time available to them outside of school may have limited their schedule and preferences. Although most sat at a desk or a table, a large number found writing to be more comfortable on the floor or in some soft chair or sofa. And while half of the students were annoyed by noise especially from people talking or the TV, about the same number were not disturbed by these sounds. Finally, most of the children did not do a great deal of revising, a conclusion supported by several other studies.

The findings, however, raise many questions and suggest many implications. What does it mean that most of these fourth-fifth graders plan as they write? Were they never taught to plan ahead? Don't they feel that planning is an option or that it is necessary? Do children who plan ahead submit better work? Should children of this age learn a planning step as a necessary part of their writing process? Are students of this age ever given instruction in the writing process? Are they ever given enough time outside of class to practice what they have been taught, or are most of their assignments done in class? By the same token, what do the time preferences imply? Are children simply writing when they have the time, or do they really prefer a certain schedule? Is it the only available time? Do they prefer it because they feel productive then, or is it simply time that doesn't in-

trude with play or TV? Have fourth-fifth graders written enough to recognize when they are productive?

Similar questions can be asked about where students write and the level and type of noise they need or are willing to accept when they compose. Do youngsters simply prefer to be more comfortable while doing a required task, or are they able to detect greater productivity? If the writing assignment is long, perhaps a move to the floor from a desk frees the mind (which had been drawn to body discomforts) once again to focus fully on the flow of ideas. What implications does this finding have for students who are unable to leave their seats while composing in class? More needs to be understood about the concept of noise. What is a distracting noise? What sounds stimulate us? When would silence be as uncomfortable as noise? Does the assignment affect what sounds help or hinder the writer? Are there certain sounds — music, tones, lights buzzing, or the hum of air conditions — that help or hinder the process? Are these universals? Probably they are not, but can experts determine some fairly general guidelines?

Perhaps, then, this small study has raised many more questions that it has answered, but hopefully it will stimulate further study of the writing process at still more age levels.

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Teaching Reading While Teaching Writing

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In "What We Know—and Don't Know—About Remedial Writing," Andrea Lunsford writes that "all language skills are related—that level of reading comprehension is related to complexity of sentence formation (or syntactic maturity) and that both are related to mature, synthetic thought processes. In view of the close relationship among language skills," Lunsford continues, "the reunion of reading and writing instruction is a consummation devoutly to be wished." This wish for fusion of reading and writing instruction is shared by many people. One of them was composition teacher and researcher Mina P. Shaughnessy who wrote that "many of the students' writing problems are reading problems" ("Basic Writing," 1976), and that "it is only when he can observe himself as a reader" that a student writer "understands his own situation as a writer" (*Errors and Expectations*, 1977, p. 223). Another is reading theorist Frank Smith who, in "The Language Arts and the Learner's Mind," explains that reading and writing "do not refer to exclusive kinds of knowledge or activity in the human brain," and that unless "the various aspects of language, and our efforts to teach them, are integrated in the learner's understanding, then there will be no learning in any case" (p. 118).

Such integration of reading and writing, of course, seldom happens in America's high school and college English classes, at least partly because of the priorities and attitudes of the teachers. As Shaughnessy puts it in *Errors and Expectations*, "teachers disagree about the importance of reading in a writing class. Some worry that reading will become a substitute for writing, especially in programs where teachers of English literature are required . . . to teach the rudiments of writing but end up teaching literature just the same" (p. 222). Clearly, a teacher *could* spend so much time on reading exercises that this work would interfere with a writing class's focus on rhetoric and composition processes. But such competition—reading *vs.* writing—really is a perversion of the natural relationship between writing and reading. Indeed, the central idea of this article is that reading is so important to writing processes that emphasis on reading (which many high school and college students need so badly) can be built into composition classes with very little disruption or competition.

To start, I would like to illustrate some facts about the interconnection of reading and writing by quoting an interesting case-study by Marie Clay, the New Zealand researcher who has received the NCTE's highest research award for her work on the early writing of children.

The following example is a diary record for Penny, a child aged 4 years 11 months, who entered school two weeks later. She had not learned to read, she could write only one word and that was her name, and she could produce a few single letters. Yet she was quite certain that her writing conveyed messages.

She received a party invitation by post from Mary. She whipped it out of her mother's hand. . . . and asked for it to be read to her. . . .

Later that day she asked for paper saying, "I want to write to Mary." . . . "How do you write come?" she asked. . . . The assumptions in the next piece of dialogue are interesting.

Mother: (Puzzled) What do you want to say?
Child: I would like (pause) to come to your party.
Mother: Don't you want "I" and "would"?
Child: (Shrilled and excited irritation) But I will have to write COME!
Come was the significant message; it was the first thing she wanted to write.

She went to the cupboard and tore off a white strip from the newspaper edge for her mother to write a copy on. She repeated the message. It was written and she read it word for word, although this was the first time she had been asked to read words. . . . The message was from within her and she was merely matching it to the marks on paper. She began to write "I" at the top right corner of the page. "That's the wrong side," her mother corrected. She then copied the words carefully and correctly with good spacing because she could copy letters quite well. . . . She asked for an envelope and copied Miss Mary B . . . on it putting the surname on the next line. Her mother was quite satisfied but Penny seemed to be searching for a word. "Put (pause) the address". She got a copy of this and added it to the envelope showing concern when she thought the line would clash with the previous one.

That incident suggests a number of ideas about the integration of writing and reading. First, it illustrates quite well a point Frank Smith has made about what leads people to learn any language activity; "there is only one essential precondition for children to learn about language, and that is that it should make sense to them, both

in its content and its motivation. Children come to understand how language works by understanding the purposes and intentions of the people who produce it, and they learn to produce language themselves to the extent that it fulfills their own purposes and intentions" (p. 119). In turn, this precondition for learning is related to the rhetorical forces of *purpose* and *audience* so important in writing instruction. Penny is moved by a need to communicate to Mary; this rhetorical motivation drives her to get a message down on paper, even though she does not know how to write and has to ask her mother to show her words to copy. Then, too, Penny's ability to "read" her message the first time she sees it is related to the third corner of the rhetorical triangle—*the writer*, with his or her distinctive accumulation of knowledge, experience, attitudes, ideas. "When the reader knows the words and the . . . passage fits into his prior knowledge and experience," Margaret Walters writes, then the reader "can comprehend the text. What the reader understands thus depends not only on what he sees on the printed page but also on the extent to which his experience contributes to his understanding."

Finally, Penny's experience returning the party invitation suggests that writing and reading are reciprocal activities. "Reading" the invitation (or in this case having it read to her) prompted both Penny's message and the rhetorical need to get the message onto paper—it prompted both the content and the motivation, to use Smith's terms. Trying to "write" the note, on the other hand, brought Penny the further need to read words that she could copy. And as she was "writing" her message, reading continued to be a factor. Penny saw (with her mother's prompting) that she was starting the message at the wrong side of the paper and so revised her approach and started over; she observed the envelope she was addressing and realized that she still needed to add the street and city lines; and as she added that information, she saw that it might collide with part of her friend's name and she expressed some concern.

Donald M. Murray has written about this reciprocal relationship of reading and writing in one of the chapters in *Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition*. Here he notes how, during writing, "four primary forces seem to interact": writing and reading, and collecting and connecting. "Writing may be ignited by any one of these forces," Murray writes, and "once writing has begun, all of the forces begin to interact with each other." Though Murray's point is to show the importance of all four forces, it is clear in his article that reading is a crucial part of writing. "Information-collecting through reading and research," he notes, is important as writers collect information and try to connect it with other pieces of information; and Murray writes that "when we write a phrase, we read it to see how it fits with what has gone before and how it may lead to what comes after."

What seems quite clear in Donald Murray's words is the first part of my thesis in this article—reading is a central part of writing. This may be an obvious idea. Certainly, it is an easy enough point to prove, since almost any article on the writing process provides evidence. For example, in "Losing One's Mind," Barrett J. Mandel writes this: "as I write, my consciousness instantly accepts or rejects . . . what it *sees* spill onto the page." Sondra Perl notes, in "Understanding Composing," that sometimes writers:

> need to return to the beginning to *reread*, to see if we captured what we meant to say . . . Sometimes the words are wrong and we need to change them. . . . Sometimes in rereading we discover that the topic is "wrong," that the direction we discovered in writing is where we really want to go.

Similarly, it is *reading* the developing text upon which Nancy I. Sommers builds her whole description of revision as a process "in which writers recognize and resolve dissonance . . . between what a text does and what the writer thinks it should do. . . ." For the simple and yet profound fact is—as Janet Emig makes clear in "Writing as a Mode of Learning" and "Hand, Eye, Brain"—that the eye operates crucially in the writing processes of sighted individuals, coordinating with the hand and brain, giving immediate feedback to the brain as words go down on paper.

Once English teachers accept this centrality of reading to writing, we easily can see that we have a vested interest in the reading abilities of our students. For unless they can read effectively, writers are cut off from the major source of feedback between paper and brain, and so from a great deal of writing's power to help a writer discover and shape ideas. Then, too, many of the assignments we make in English classes are based on written materials. In summaries, book reports, analyses of literary works, comparisons of positions taken by authors in essays, and other such assignments, reading is a crucial forerunner to writing. So students who cannot read with comprehension may be unable even to *begin* to write effective responses to such assignments.

Once responsible, professional writing teachers recognize their vested interest in effective student reading, the next step is to look for ways to blend reading with writing instruction. What we discover, as we begin this search, is the second point I am trying to make in this article—that reading can be built into writing instruction with very little disruption. So, in just a few pages, I would like to sketch a few strategies with which we can strengthen our students' reading abilities at the same time that we are teaching writing.

A concrete way to foster reading ability at the same time that we teach writing is to work with sentence combining in our classes. For

some time, as you know, the evidence has been rolling in: work combining several simple "kernel" sentences into more complex, less redundant, more stylistically appealing sentences is an effective way to build students' intuitive sense of syntax and to improve student writing. And, if you think about it a minute, you probably sense that working at sentence combining—deciding how to combine kernels and which of various combinings is the most effective—requires hard work at reading.

The connections between sentence combining and reading, however, are tighter than that. As Marilyn Sternglass suggests in "Sentence Combining and the Reading of Sentences," inexperienced readers "have difficulty holding syntactic patterns and meaning in their memories long enough to be able to link them up correctly within the sentences they are working with." The reason for this is that the short-term memory can hold only a few separate items of information at one time, and weak readers, focusing on one word at a time, "quickly exceed the limitations of short-term memory in building a relationship among items in any sentence that has more than five to seven words." What sentence combining does is expand the amount of information in each chunk retained in the short-term memory. As Sternglass puts it, "the student engaging in sentence combining must extract the meaning from each of the kernels. . . . Now each kernel has become a chunk and the student has been forced to process the larger units of language as units of meaning." For this reason, Sternglass feels that sentence combining "develops fluency in reading, much as it promotes . . . fluency in writing. . . ."

Sentence combining, of course, focuses on the manipulation of completed sentences. But we also can build student reading ability by the way we organize instruction before students write anything. For instance, we can follow teaching ideas Bonnie J. F. Meyer offers in "Reading Research and the Composition Teacher: The Importance of Plans." Here, Meyer describes five common "plans" that guide writers during composition and readers during the act of reading:

> The *antecedent/consequent* plan is devoted to presenting *causal relationships* (like the "if/then" of antecedent/consequent statements in logic). The *comparison* plan presents *two opposing viewpoints*, and can be subdivided accordingly; the *alternative* view gives equal weight to the two sides, whereas the *adversative* view clearly favors one side over the other. The *descriptive* plans develops a topic by describing its component parts, for instance, by presenting attributes, specifications, or settings. . . . The *response* plan contains some kind of statement

> followed by a response, such as remark and reply; question and answer; problem and solution; and so on. Finally the *time-order* plan relates events or ideas according to chronology. (pp. 38-39).

Meyer suggests that stressing *recognition* of these plans as part of reading instruction and *use* of these plans during writing instruction can have very positive reciprocal results. As she puts it:

> Explicit instruction in the identifying and using of plans can be included in the curriculum for both reading and writing. For example, composition classes could be devoted to analyzing prose passages in terms of the types of plan and the functions of the plans that the writer has selected. Students might gain insights by applying such an analysis to their own writings (or that of fellow-students) in order to determine if the plan and its functions (goals or purposes) are clear and consistent in a particular case. Where they are not, students should have guides to follow for revision. . . . (p. 47)

Among other things, here, Bonnie Meyer provides "support for composition teachers who assign papers that describe, compare, raise problems, and so forth" (p. 40). And if we want to do this, it seems to me, it is essential that we try to build student reading ability by the way we organize discovery or generating or "prewriting" activities. More specifically, when we ask students to write book reports, to summarize and react to articles, to compare the positions taken by authors, to analyze literary works, or to complete other assignments that hinge on understanding written materials, it only makes good sense to develop generating strategies appropriate to the assignment.

Probably the most flexible and useful of these strategies are critical reading questions, such as these that I use in classes that require students to write about short pieces of non-fiction prose:

- What are the main parts of the piece? Note the key sentences —ones that make assertions that form the skeleton of the piece.
- How does the author blend assertion and supporting specifics? Which key sentences have the most support? The least? Are some key sentences supported by one or more assertions as well as by supporting specifics? Are some key sentences left unsupported by specifics?
- Are there places where the author may not be making literally true statements? Note places that involve sarcasm, ironic statements opposite of what the writer really means, exaggeration for humor, figures of speech, etc.

- Considering the questions you just answered, which parts of the piece are of major and minor significance? Where is the central emphasis of the piece located? (How do you know this is the central emphasis?)
- Can you outline the main skeleton of the piece so as to show the central emphasis and the relative importance of the key sentences?
- Do the organization of the piece and the way that sentences are written help or hinder your efforts to follow the writer's line of thinking?
- Are there inconsistencies—places in the piece that seem to contradict or call into question other statements?
- What are the underlying assumptions upon which the piece is built? Do you agree with them? If you do, have you read uncritically? If you don't agree with the assumptions, have you been an unfair reader by turning the piece off too soon?
- Do there seem to be factual errors, or opinions asserted as if they were facts, or facts that seem to be twisted to fit into the assumptions behind the piece?
- Does the piece try to manipulate you unfairly by using propaganda techniques or emotionally charged language? If so, does this manipulation seem to be used instead of good details, solid research, logic, etc.? (By the way, don't assume that emotionally-charged language is necessarily bad. Is the emotion consistent with the points being made in the piece? Is the emotion used along with—rather than as a replacement for—logic, evidence, etc.?)

These questions help students study an assigned essay to discover its main points, organization, underlying assumptions, and supporting material; they also help students evaluate the effectiveness and honesty of the writing. But by helping students do these things, are we building their skills as readers or writers—or both?

Critical reading strategies—for instance "SQ3R"—typically are found in the "reading" sections of study-skills handbooks, and in texts like Anita Harnadek's *Critical Reading Improvement* (McGraw-Hill, 1978). They teach close reading, comprehension, the recognition of author-assumptions, the drawing of reader-inferences, and the like. At the same time, though, critical reading questions focus attention on ideas that writing teachers often stress: thesis statements, topic sentences, differences between generalizations and evidence, the importance of clear organization, manipulative language and the like. So working with critical reading strategies can, at once, help students understand material about which they

are going to write, improve their powers of reading comprehension, and reinforce lessons from their writing texts.

Critical reading questions can help students understand written materials they are to write about. Still, though, students have to convert this understanding into specific kinds of writing that they may not know how to do—summaries, comparisons of articles on similar topics, book reports, and the like. And such writing requires intellectual activity that furthers student reading ability. As Thomas J. Farrell says of summary writing, it "requires close attention to a text to pick out what is important and it necessitates careful comprehension to accurately state in one's own words what another person would have said."

Being able to write about written materials is a useful writing skill and it enhances student reading ability. But many high school and college students do not know how to write such papers. So it just makes sense to devise writing assignments that require such writing—summaries, say, or comparisons—and then to develop instructional methods to teach students how to complete the assignments. For instance, to teach students how to summarize, I have found it helpful to stress critical reading questions for several weeks before starting a three or five day emphasis on writing summaries—a unit I have adapted from the approach Ann Rayne describes in "Precis Writing: An Approach to Composition."

A Way to Help Students Learn to Write Summaries

1. In class, discuss a paragraph similar to material you want students to summarize. Begin with general responses and gradually move to questions about the point and evidence of the writing. Arrive at a list on the board of essential points in the paragraph, and the order they appear in.
2. In class, examine what a written summary looks like. Give out another paragraph and a summary of it. Have students mark in the original material that is retained in the summary. Discuss things like the relative length of original and summary, condensation of phrases, retention of essential points and their order, elimination of examples.
3. Assign students to write a summary of another paragraph you give out. Prepare yourself to respond to two sorts of problems:
   —Lifting and copying key sentences rather than restating them in the student's own words.
   —Restating essential points but providing no transitions.
4. In class, discuss student examples and model summaries to get at transitions and "flow," and to suggest how different people emphasize different things as they summarize the same article.
5. Assign a second summary, perhaps over a somewhat longer piece of writing.

And to help students prepare to write comparisons of two articles dealing with the same general topic, I again emphasize critical reading questions, before asking students to complete a structured comparison worksheet.

Worksheet for Comparing Two Pieces of Writing on the Same Topic
Directions:

1. Complete the critical reading questions for each article.
2. On your own paper, make up a chart that follows the same form as the one below. Make your chart as long as you need to deal with all of the important points in the two articles.
3. In column 1 on your chart, put the main points of the article that seems the more comprehensive or the clearest or the most interesting to you. Then put main points from the second article in column 2. Be sure not to let points "line up" (A-A, B-B, etc.) unless the two points deal with the same basic issue.
4. Look for "hits"—places where both articles treat the same basic issue.

MAIN POINTS—ARTICLE 1	MAIN POINTS—ARTICLE 2	COMPARATIVE SENTENCES
State each point compactly in a complete sentence. Use your words, but include brief quotes of words or phrases where useful. Give page numbers of points in a parenthesis.	Be sure that each point stated in this column is on the same issue or subject or ideas as the point stated in Column 1. State the points compactly, as in the directions for Col. 1.	For each "hit" write a single detailed sentence that makes clear how the statements in the two columns relate. Work to bring out *shadings* of difference and similarity, not just huge disagreement or total agreement.
A.	A.	
B.	B.	
C.	C.	
D.	D.	

SUMMARY SENTENCES

Write three detailed, specific sentences, each of which summarizes a different relationship between the way the two ar-

ticles treat their common subject. Do not simply put any of the Comparative Sentences from column 3.

a—

b—

c—

After students have completed summaries, comparisons, or other assignments growing out of critical reading, there remains at least one more way to build reading into writing instruction. This is to make it clear to students that revision and editing of completed drafts are forms of critical reading. We can, for instance, structure our comments on papers, and our remarks in class or writing conferences, around the same critical reading questions we asked students to complete when they were trying to understand assigned readings. We can develop direction sheets so that student groups discuss drafts in the light of these questions. And we can ask student writers to apply the questions to their own drafts—just as they would to any other piece of prose—in order to locate strengths and problems with theses, organization, logic, and the like.

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